

# L'Chaim



## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

The climax of the Exodus from Egypt and the purpose for which the world was created was the Revelation on Mount Sinai. It was there that G-d gave the Ten Commandments and the Torah to the Jewish People. In front of the assemblage of every single Jewish man, woman and child, and in the presence of the souls of every Jew that would be born throughout the millennia, G-d descended on Mount Sinai and said, "I am (anochi) the L-rd your G-d." These historic events are described in this week's Torah portion, Yitro.

The Midrash points out a curious fact: The word "anochi" is not Hebrew--it is an Egyptian word!

The Ten Commandments are a condensation of all the guiding principles of the Torah. Of these, the first two commandments, "I am the L-rd your G-d" and "You shall have no other gods," have an even greater measure of holiness, for they were heard by the Jews directly from G-d Himself, and not through Moses. The first of these two commandments, by virtue of the order in which it was given, has even more significance. Why, then, did G-d choose to express the most lofty and exalted concept, the "I," the very essence of G-d Himself, in a foreign tongue? Why didn't G-d use the Hebrew word for I--"Ani"--to begin the most important utterance ever heard?

In order to understand this paradox, we must first examine the purpose of the Revelation on Mount Sinai. The Torah was not given to guard the holiness contained in the Hebrew tongue; for this, no G-dly earth-shaking Revelation would have been necessary. G-d descended on Mount Sinai for one reason only--to enable us to elevate even the lowest and most mundane aspects of our lives and of the physical world, including the Egyptian language, the spoken words of the most corrupt and abominable nation.

Holiness existed before the Revelation, and Jews had long occupied themselves with the Torah. The innovation of the Revelation was the ability to "fuse" holiness with mundane, to imbue physical matter with spirituality. Even things that were seemingly far removed from the realm of holiness could now be used to bring G-dliness into the world.

The aim of the Revelation is pointedly emphasized by the use of the Egyptian word "anochi." A Jew's daily life involves elevating the physical and transforming it into a vessel for G-dliness. Prayer and Torah study enable us to reach only a limited level of spirituality; elevating that which is base and seemingly trivial, by adhering to the laws of the Torah, enables us to attain even greater heights of holiness.

When we fulfill G-d's will by elevating even the "anochi," as G-d Himself did, we fulfill the purpose of the Torah and carry out the world's Divine plan.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

## True Connection Is In The Details

By Rabbi Simon Jacobson

Recent surveys show that as much as 80-90% of Americans will say that they believe in G-d, but 40-50% will say they do not practice a religion.

Indeed, if G-d is all-powerful and infinite, and religion is a set of laws and rituals and a list of things that one must or must not do, it would seem that G-d could hardly be described as "religious." Nor would it seem that being religious will bring a person closer to G-d. If G-d transcends all limitations and definition, why would the way to relate to G-d be to impose further restriction and definition on our already finite and constricted lives?

Yet this paradox is not confined to the religious-spiritual aspect of the human experience. Throughout the ages, whenever man has endeavored to escape the bounds of the mundane and the everyday, he did so by submitting to a structured, even rigid, code of behavior.

My favorite example for this is the discipline of music. There are just so many musical notes on the scale, and no one—even the greatest musician—can create additional notes or subtract any. Anyone who wishes to play or compose music must conform to this absolute, immutable system.

And yet, by submitting to this framework, the musician will

create a piece of music that touches the deepest place in a person's heart--a place that cannot be described, much less the defined. By using this very precise, mathematical formula, the musician will create something that transports the listener to a place high above the confines and fetters of everyday life, high above the strictures of physics and mathematics.

Imagine, then, a musical discipline whose laws are dictated by the inventor and creator of life--by the one who has intimate knowledge of life's every strength and every vulnerability, of its every potential and its every sensitivity.

The only question remaining is: but why so many laws? Why must this discipline dictate how we are to wake and how we are to sleep, and virtually everything in between?

Because life itself, in all its infinite complexity, is our instrument of connection with G-d. Every "scale" on its "range" must be exploited to achieve the optimum connection.

Music being our metaphor, we cannot but quote the famous anecdote in which Archduke Ferdinand of Austria reputedly says to Mozart, "Beautiful music, but far too many notes." To which the composer replied, "Yes, your majesty, but not one more than necessary."

# SLICE OF LIFE

Marking The 37th Yahrzeit of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka



This year, Thursday, February 20th, corresponding to the Hebrew date of Chof Beis Shevat, marks 37 years since the passing of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson, daughter of the previous Rebbe and wife of our Rebbe.

In connection with Chof-Beis Shevat, we present the following collection of short stories and anecdotes about the Rebbetzin. Even after moving to the United States and eventually assuming the royal title of “The Rebbetzin” when the Rebbe assumed the leadership of Chabad, the Rebbetzin remained a very private person, shunning all publicity. Hence, little is known about the Rebbetzin, even from her later years; and even less is known about her early years, when she and the Rebbe were still in Europe. Nevertheless, as time goes on, more facts come to light, telling the story of her giant personality. In this essay we have collected some of the facts that tell the story of her life, including much information that has only recently become known.

In a fascinating conversation during the shiva, the Rebbe mentions that the Rebbetzin, like all tzaddikim, is considered “alive” even after her passing, and moreover—she is even more alive than during her lifetime. We can

therefore be certain that she bestows her blessings upon us, as we continue fulfilling the Rebbe’s work to bring the final and complete redemption, speedily.

On more than one occasion, the Rebbe referenced the potency of the Rebbetzin’s blessings and their ability to affect positive outcomes. Once, the Lubavitch Women’s Organization sent the Rebbetzin a bouquet of flowers, together with a list of individuals for whom brachos were requested. Setting aside the flowers for the Rebbetzin, the secretary passed on the letter to the Rebbe who, observing that it was addressed to his wife, asked his secretary to give it to her, saying, “She is also capable of giving blessings.”

Dr. Moshe Feldman once asked the Rebbe about the difference between the Rebbe’s brachos and the Rebbetzin’s brachos. The Rebbe explained: “For my brachos one ought to prepare a proper keili (receptacle), for the brachos of the Rebbetzin one does not need a keili.”

Mr. Isaac Milstein related: “My family emigrated from Russia to Israel and in 5738\* we moved to New York. My mother found work as a stylist at Freeda Wigs in Crown Heights. Once, the Rebbetzin called the store asking to speak to the manager, Mrs. Kugel. My mother, who answered the phone, said “Mrs. Kugel is out, would you like to leave a message?” and asked who was calling. The Rebbetzin replied asking her to convey that Mrs. Schneerson called and asked if Mrs. Kugel could call back at a good time. My mother then realized that it was the Rebbetzin on the line and said: “Rebbetzin! It is a great honor to speak with you, and I will relay the message.” The Rebbetzin then said to my mother: “I can hear in your voice that something is bothering you, is everything okay?” My mother burst out crying. She explained that our family recently immigrated to America, and that my grandmother had suddenly fallen ill, and the doctors say that she has only a few months or maximum a year to live. The Rebbetzin then switched to speaking in Russian and gave a bracha that my grandmother will be alright and that she

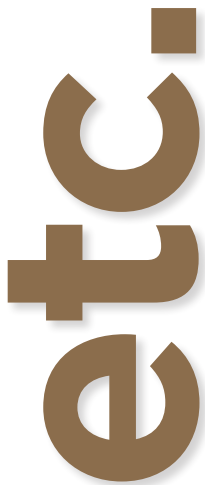
will emerge from the whole ordeal in peace. And so it was. Against all of the doctors’ bleak predictions, my grandmother survived and lived another 23 years, from 5738\* until 5761\*.

Rabbi Levi Azimov of Paris relates: “During their first years of shlichus, my parents, Rabbi Shmuel and Bassie Azimov, once traveled to the Rebbe on the chartered flight that started off in Israel and passed through Europe. Before leaving back home, they visited the Rebbetzin and she asked them, ‘When are you going?’ to which they replied, ‘This evening, with the charter.’ “About a half an hour later, the Rebbetzin again asked them, ‘When will you be going?’ and they answered, ‘This evening’. When the Rebbetzin repeated the question a third time a bit later, the Azimovs were puzzled. Was this the Rebbetzin’s way of hinting to them that they should stay and not travel? In the end however, they left with everyone else that very evening.

“Sometime after take off, the pilot announced that one of the engines caught fire and they would have to make an emergency landing. At that very moment, the Rebbe who was at the time in 770 walked out of his office and asked the secretaries if there was any news about the charter. “Miraculously they landed safely, and immediately called the Rebbe’s secretariat to notify the Rebbe of what had occurred. The Rebbe gave them a few instructions, among them that they should recite one of the Rebbe’s maamarim. The next day they all left again homeward bound, only this time landing safely at their destination.” In retrospect, it is fascinating that the Rebbe and the Rebbetzin both sensed the issue with the charter before it occurred.

In a talk delivered at the end of the shiva, the Rebbe explained that the Rebbetzin, as the daughter of the nossi hador, certainly shares her merits-zechusim with everyone else, manifesting in blessings for each and every person in everything that they need, culminating in the greatest blessing for the final and complete redemption.

Reprinted from the Derher Magazine



## New Jersey Friendship Circle Volunteers Bring Joy of Shabbat to Hospital Bound

It all started with the simple idea of bringing the feeling of Shabbat into hospital rooms for patients and their families.

A decade later, it has evolved into feeding hundreds of people at eight area hospitals and senior homes in northern New Jersey.

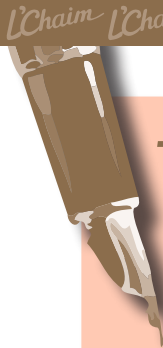
Ten years ago, Dara Orbach, a Livingston, N.J., native was in a New York City hospital with her mother-in-law and Shabbat fast approaching. She was unclear as to how she would manage and how she would find Shabbat light candles, but before she could worry too much, she received a Shabbat kit that left a lasting memory. “We saw this beautiful box in the hospital that had everything we needed to make Shabbos.

Orbach immediately brought the idea of creating Shabbat kits for their own New Jersey community to Rabbi Zalman and Toba Grossbaum, who co-direct Chabad-Lubavitch’s Friendship Circle of New Jersey. Today they prepare close to 200 Shabbat kits every week, and the additional 20 to 40 specially curated Bikur Cholim bruch bags for patients in local hospitals and those recovering at home.

## CUSTOMS

What are some customs related to giving a baby a Jewish name?

Our sages say that parents have Divine inspiration when giving their child a Jewish name. It is customary to name a child after a close relative or friend, or after a person with outstanding virtues. One’s Jewish name can be an indication of one’s character, goals and essence. One’s Jewish name is closely linked to the spark of G-dliness—the neshama (soul) within every Jew.



# The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

## THE SHINING COINS

*Freely translated from a letter of the Lubavitcher Rebbe to the Lubavitch Women's Organization for their eighth annual convention.*

In connection with the 150th yahrtzeit of the Alter Rebbe (Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of the Chabad Chasidic movement) I will relate briefly the well-known story about one of the Alter Rebbe's first chasidim, Reb Gavriel Nosei-Chein and his wife Chana Rivka. Reb Gavriel was one of the most prominent Jews in Vitebsk. Twenty-five years after their marriage, he and his wife were still childless. Then, by reason of sustained persecution, he became impoverished. He was understandably upset therefore, when an appeal reached him from the Alter Rebbe to participate in a case of redeeming Jewish captives with a substantial contribution, as he was wont to do in former days, but which was now far beyond his means. When his wife learned of her husband's predicament, she sold her jewelry and raised the required amount. Then she scrubbed and polished the coins until they gleamed brightly, and with a prayer in her heart that their mazal brighten up, she wrapped the coins in a bundle which she handed over to her husband to take to the Alter Rebbe.

Coming into the presence of the Alter Rebbe in Liozna, Reb Gavriel placed the bundle of money on the table. The Alter Rebbe told him to open it. At once the coins shone with an extraordinary brilliance.

The Alter Rebbe become engrossed in thought, then said: "Of all the gold, silver and brass which the Jews contributed to the Mishkan (Sanctuary), nothing shone so brightly as the Laver and its Stand (which were made of the brass mirrors contributed by the Jewish women with selflessness and joy).

"Tell me where did you get these coins?"

Reb Gavriel revealed to the Rebbe the state of his affairs and how his wife, Chana Rivka bas Beila, had raised the money.

The Alter Rebbe placed his head on his hands and for some time was in deep contemplation. Then he lifted his head and bestowed on Reb Gavriel and his wife the blessing of children, long life, riches and extraordinary grace. He told Reb Gavriel to close his business in Vitebsk and to begin to trade in precious gems and diamonds.

The Alter Rebbe's blessing was fulfilled. Reb Gavriel Nosei-Chein became wealthy. He and his wife were also blessed with sons and daughters. He lived to the age of 110 years, and his wife survived him by two years.

When my father-in-law of saintly memory [the previous Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn] related this story, he completed it with the teaching of the Alter Rebbe in connection with Sefira (the period of preparation for Shavuot-to receive the Torah):

It is written, "You should count--u'safartem lachem--unto yourselves." These words also mean "You shall illumine yourselves" (as in the Hebrew word sapir--sapphire, known for its purity and brilliance).



The message of this story, in addition to the other profound teachings which it contains, is: Although the coins for tzedaka--charity--are of a fixed quality and value, nevertheless, the very same coins, when they are given with selflessness and joy, assume an extraordinary value and brilliance, bringing life, and joy in life, even in this world, and certainly in the world which is all "light."

The same is true, of course, with spiritual tzedaka. Every effort and activity to spread the Torah and mitzvot, as illuminated with the light and warmth of Chasidic philosophy, and therefore inspired with selflessness and joy, are not only more successful in themselves, but also have a much greater effect and a much greater merit.

May G-d grant that each one of you, amongst our people, should experience "U'safartem lachem," as interpreted by the Alter Rebbe, and that everyone should illumine and purify himself, as well as the home and the environment, with the light of the Torah and mitzvot and Chasidic conduct in daily life. This will bring pure light into every aspect of life, the material as well as the spiritual.

# MOSHIACH MATTERS

Rabbi Moshe Cordovero (the Ramak), who lived over 500 years ago, described the period immediately preceding the Final Redemption thus: "All nations will one

day come together and start talking peace amongst themselves. This talk of peace will have one underlying goal: to destroy Israel. And their rationale will be because they [the Jews] established for themselves their own government, and though the Jews will be in tremendous danger at that time, nevertheless they will not be destroyed; in fact, from that very situation they will be saved."

# A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

In Memory of Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman, Director of the Lubavitch Youth Organization and Founder of the L'Chaim Publication.

## From the Archives

*When the famous Rabbi Akiva returned from the great yeshiva in Jerusalem to his humble home after 24 years of intense and unceasing Torah study, he brought with him his 22,000 students. When his wife Rachel approached him through the crowd, Rabbi Akiva announced "All that I have, and all that you have, we owe to her." These words of Rabbi Akiva are recorded in the Talmud (Ketubot 63a).*

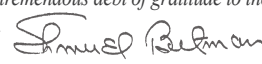

*In another Talmudic Tractate (Yevamot 62b) it says that Rabbi Akiva's disciples saved the Torah at that time.*

*In a beautiful letter from the Rebbe to the Lubavitch Women's Organization for one of their annual conventions, the Rebbe explains that these two Talmudic teachings are interconnected. "This means that the entire edifice of the Oral Torah, the very basis of the existence of our Jewish people and its way of life, is ultimately to be credited to a Jewish woman," the Rebbe writes there.*

*This Thursday, the 22nd of Shevat, we commemorate the yahrtzeit of a most unique, righteous Jewish woman, the Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson.*

*Upon the passing of her father, the Previous Rebbe, the Rebbetzin strongly encouraged the Rebbe to assume the mantle of leadership. This entailed tremendous self-sacrifice and unimaginable devotion on the part of the Rebbetzin. Although we cannot fully understand just how much of a sacrifice it was, she certainly understood. For, during a U.S. court case concerning the ownership of the library of the Previous Rebbe, it was the Rebbetzin's decisive statement that "the library belongs to the Chasidim because my father belonged to the Chasidim" which helped the Lubavitch movement win the case so that the stolen books were returned to "770."*

*Thus, when the Rebbetzin encouraged the Rebbe to accept the entreaties of the tens of thousands of Chasidim world-wide who were requesting that he become Rebbe, she knew that from that time forth the Rebbe would belong to the Chasidim and to world Jewry at large.*

*We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the Rebbetzin.*  

## L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה י מושקא

The name of our publication has special meaning. It stands for the name of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson (obm), wife of the Rebbe.



Published by  
**Lubavitch Youth Organization**  
1408 President St, Brooklyn, NY, 11213  
phone 718 778 6000

- Chairman
- Director
- Publishing Director
- Program Director
- Secretary
- Administrator
- Layout
- Associate Editor
- Chairman Editorial Comm.
- Rebbe photo

- Rabbi David Raskin ז"ל
- Rabbi Shmuel Butman ז"ל
- Rabbi Yosef Y. Butman
- Rabbi Kasriel Kastel
- Rabbi Moshe P. Goldman
- Rabbi Shlomo Friedman
- Rivky Laufer
- David Y. B. Kaufmann ז"ל
- Rabbi Nissen Mangel
- S. Roumani

L'Chaim contains words from sacred literature. Please do not deface or discard. All contents © 2024 by L.Y.O. ISSN 1050 0480

**L'Chaim Subscriptions**  
For a one year regular or gift subscription, send \$55, payable to LYO (560 elsewhere) to: L'Chaim, 1408 President St., Bklyn., NY, 11213  
Please call our office before sending in any subscriptions.

**Learn about Moshiach**  
Visit [www.moshiach.com](http://www.moshiach.com) or call (718) 953 6100



# IT HAPPENED ONCE

The life of Queen Shlomit Alexandra was fraught with violent, political conflict and internecine strife. The saintly queen, however, survived to right the enormous crimes of her predecessors, and eventually became known as Shlomtzion--she who brought peace to Zion.

Her first husband, the ruthless king Aristobulus, seized power from his own mother, imprisoned his brothers and persecuted the Sages with great vengeance. After he died, having reigned only one year, the rule passed to his widow, Queen Shlomit Alexandra. She was the sister of the renowned Torah giant Shimon ben Shetach, the leading sage of the generation, and it was under his guidance that she did so much to repair the damage done to the Jewish people during this violent period.

The Queen's first act after the death of Aristobulus was to free his imprisoned brothers, the oldest of whom, Alexander Yannai, she married. Unfortunately, and to the terrible detriment of the Jewish nation, Yannai was no better than his short-lived brother. He devoted his energies to war, which took up most of his 27-year reign. His military exploits, however, were performed for his own lust for power and glory.

Far more serious for the Jewish people was the battle raging between the Sadducees and the Pharisees, tearing apart the fabric of the Jewish nation. The Sadducees, whose objective it was to eliminate the Oral Torah, strove in every possible fashion to seize power from the Pharisees, the ancestors of all Jews today. To that end, they exerted pressure on the rulers through political intrigue and even outright slander against their enemies. Eventually King Yannai used the mercenary troops which supplemented his own native army to mount a deadly persecution of these leaders of the Jewish people.

We can only imagine the terrible pain of Queen Shlomtzion, married to two Jewish kings of noble lineage, who perpetrated terrible crimes against the Torah Sages, the greatest of whom was her own brother. It was under her benevolent influence that Yannai was persuaded to relent in his war against the Pharisees for a time, and allow those remaining to return to Israel from their forced exiles. Once back in the Holy Land, Rabbi Shimon ben Shetach and his sister the queen were able to do much to restore Torah to the people. They acted to restore the authority of the Sanhedrin and to insure the education of the young.

The pair were responsible for establishing the first system of public education known. In earlier times education was the domain of the parents. If the parents were poor, uneducated, or deceased, the child was not educated.

This respite in the persecution of the Sages did not last, however. In a desperate attempt to wrest power from the Pharisees, the king and his Sadducee allies staged a ploy which succeeded in enraging the populace and provided a pretext on which to enlarge their terrible, bloody designs. When this despised king finally died he transferred power to his queen, instructing her to make peace with the Pharisees, calling his erstwhile allies, the Sadducees, "hypocrites."

Now the Queen could finally do as she wished, and her accomplishments are her praise even to our generation. It is said that during the reign of Queen Shlomtzion rain descended every Friday night (as a sign of blessing). The produce of the Land was remarkable. Wheat grew as big as kidneys, barley like olives and lentils were the size of gold dinars (the largest coin of that time).

When the Queen assumed the throne all persecution of the Sages ceased and the Pharisees were restored to their rightful positions of power. Shimon ben Shetach sat at the head of the Sanhedrin, and in every area of life the queen and her brother

worked diligently to restore peace and harmony to the Land. It was during her rule that the institution of the ketubah, the legal marriage contract, was established. This ensured that no Jewish woman would be left economically unprotected in the event of a divorce or widowhood. The courts were reorganized so that justice was again available to the people.

Her reign was a true "Golden Age" for the Jewish people in their land. The Sages even preserved samples of the amazing grains which flourished in her time to show succeeding generations the rewards of observing the Torah. Just as during the reign of the pious King Shlomo, now also, the Jews lived securely in their land, undisturbed by the nations which surrounded them.

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the weekly Torah Portion

### And Yitro [Jethro], the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law...and Yitro, father-in-law of Moses (Ex. 18:1, 2)

Why is "father-in-law" mentioned twice in describing Yitro? Yitro was an important man in his own right. As the "priest of Midian," he already enjoyed a high status. Yet he chose to be known as "Moses' father-in-law," for he knew this was his true claim to greatness. (Ohr Hachayim)

### You shall select out of all the people...men of truth, hating bribe (18:21)

You will have to search hard to find these people, Yitro counseled Moses, for men possessing these qualities usually run away from positions of honor and do not sit idle all day, enabling you to find them easily. (Shaar Bat Rabim)

### And Yitro heard...and he came...to Moses (18:1-5)

What did Yitro hear to cause him to seek out Moses? He heard of the miracles of the Red Sea and the war against Amalek. These events aroused in him a strong belief in G-d, and he set off. Why did he need to see Moses personally? Yitro knew that in order to learn Torah properly, he couldn't rely on second-hand information. He had to go to the leader of the generation and learn from him directly. (Sichot Tzadikim)

### You shall sanctify today and tomorrow, and they shall wash their clothes (19:10)

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi once said, "You shall sanctify today and tomorrow" refers to the G-dliness and holiness that is bestowed from Above; "and they shall wash their clothes" refers to the effort that each of us must make on his own behalf.

His grandson, the Tzemach Tzedek, elaborated: "The command to sanctify 'today and tomorrow' was given to Moses, and indeed, in every generation, the tzadik and leader of that generation has the power to elevate the world and imbue it with more holiness. However, this must first be preceded by the preparation of 'washing the clothes.' Each individual must first work on himself to cleanse the garments of his soul--his thoughts, deeds and actions--before asking for help from Above."

Dedicated to  
**Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson**  
 wife of the Rebbe, daughter of the Previous Rebbe  
 on her yartzeit, 22 Shevat



**5:12 Candle Lighting Time**  
 NY Metro Area  
**16 Shevat / February 14**  
 Torah Portion Yisro  
 Shabbat ends 6:12 PM